

**JUDITH MOLYNEUX** is an independent professional, consultant designer offering a full range of design services and courses including all aspects of interior planning, design, décor and home design.

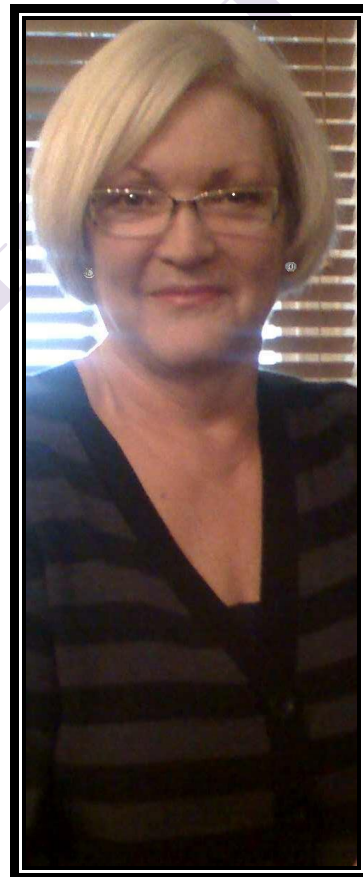
Judith is a **Certified Workplace Trainer or Assessor BSZ40198** and **Certified Professional Member of the Design Institute of Australia** and has practiced for 32 years as a professional in this field.

Her clients include a wide range of home owners, businesses and professional, medical and dental, government departments as well as consulting architects to whom she acts as a specialist consultant.

Through her research and practical experience, Judith has a strong interest in the physio-psychological aspects of interior design.

Through publishing this guidebook Judith hopes to provide necessary information on home design, building and furnishing in an easily understood, chronologically formatted manual for those embarking on what can be, one of the most traumatic and expensive, but most exciting experiences of their lifetime.

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## A BEGINNING to home design and decorating



To design and build, purchase or renovate an existing house can consume substantial amounts of hard earned, precious and borrowed money.

Budget, types of Contracts, your obligations to your Architect, Designer or Builder and their obligations to you the Client, options for litigation if required are issues which must not be ignored.

Being reasonably conversant with the building process will make your building project far more enjoyable and successful.

Before planning your new home, eliminate as many pre-conceived ideas you have taken on board over the years such as expensive decor finishes and fixtures and trendy facade imagery.

Listed below are essential criteria to consider and research prior to the selection and design of a new home or home renovation and I list these as follows in terms of their priority.

## BUDGETS

Budgets may be determined by the following:-

- **State and Local Government** requirements, regulations and fees;
- **Building Contract** - there are basically two types of building contracts being **Fixed Fee** or **Cost Plus**.;  
*(See page 3 - 4 of this chapter)*
- **Method of appointing a Builder-tender** process or nominated contractor;  
*(See Chapter Building Services)*
- **Costs** – avoid expensive unnecessary building clichés' and finishes such as granite benchtops and imported appliances as there are less expensive often more practical products available;
- **Site** - location, size and contour of the building block will determine the complexity of design, the difficulty of building process, travelling and accommodation and material delivery if the site is remote;
- **Overall Design** - traditional or contemporary, highly original designed by Architect or mass produced designed by Builder;
- **Size** – determined by number of family members and guests;
- **Building materials** and availability;
- **Embellishment** - exterior and interior decorative elements such as plaster and timber trim, and complexity of design and interior finishes;

- **Building orientation** – determine impact of environmental issues such as sun, heat and ventilation,
- **Interior space** - requirements such as usable and non usable areas, storage, private, recreational and service rooms and facilities;
- **Building details** – such as standard and non-standard elements, fixtures and fittings;
- **Security** – fire and burglary;
- **Cabinetworks** - standard or non standard;
- **Hardware** - Standard and non standard;
- **Services** - standard or non standard plumbing, electrical, service fixtures and appliances,
- **Insurances** – property, workmen, materials and public liability;
- **Legal Advice** – a fee of \$250.00 to \$500.00 may be money well spent determining problems which may arise during the design and building process.

## **If the home is to be designed and built to a minimal budget:-**

- Avoid irregular and complicated building sites,
- Avoid unusable interior space,
- Reject unnecessary complexity in the final design by keeping it simple, either square or

rectangular avoiding unnecessary changes of direction in the floor slab, brickwork and roofing.

- Keep ceiling and roof heights standard and lower rather than higher,
- Minimize trendy embellishment,
- Use standard doors and windows,
- Use standard fixtures and fittings,
- Avoid expensive finishes such as granite benchtops and vanities as there are less expensive often more practical products available,
- Consult with an Architect, Lawyer or Interior Designer prior to signing the Building Contract.

## **HOME DESIGN AND BUILDING PROFESSIONALS**

Your new home may be designed by:-

- **An Architect** - registered member of the Architect's Registration Board (ARB) highly specialised in all aspects of building design and construction to include preliminary and concept design, final design, full design documentation, tendering process, and administration and supervision of the building works to completion.
- Architects are professionals legally bound by the Architectural Practice Act 2009.
- **A Builder** – a registered member of a relevant State Building Act specialised in all aspects of building construction and provider of building services and products

but not necessarily building design.

A Builder may be appointed through the Architect's tender process or nominated by the client.

To ensure competitive fixed building prices, the tender process is advisable.

All necessary comprehensive and complete building documents and specifications are required for the tender process.

Calling tenders for your building works may cost more initially for Architect's design fees but ultimately saves on budget overruns and unnecessary arbitration ultimately.

In the case of litigation, the Builder's Registration Board or equivalent in each State applies.

- **Building Designers** – are architectural draftsmen or builders and may or may not be registered with the Building Commission in WA or equivalent in other States.

Building Designer's may promote their designs as being "architecturally" designed. All care should be taken when using the services of Building Designers.

- **Interior Designer** – is not qualified to provide home structural design services but may be registered with the Design Institute of Australia and qualified to provide interior design services and related materials and products.

Interior Designers can advise the Architect or Builder on behalf of the client as the client's representative with respect to interior design works.

Interior Designers may also advise their client on interior finishes, fixtures and fittings. The Interior Designer may or may not be appropriately educated or well experienced in design so all care should be taken when appointing the services of an Interior Designer.

Once the contract has commenced and if litigation is required pursuant to misleading conduct, The Fair Trading Act applies.

## CONTRACTS

The two common types of building contracts for building works are the **Cost Plus** and the **Fixed Price** and they are compared as follows:-

**Cost Plus** - Contract Sum in this form is determined as the actual cost of labour and materials to which is added a fixed fee or percentage of cost payable to the builder in consideration of provision of management of the project.

A builder or tradesperson can in this case only estimate the overall cost prior to commencement of the building works.

It is important to remember that an estimate is not a fixed price.

A Cost Plus contract is not normally recommended for obvious reasons

and the Home/Building Contract Act does not apply to this form of agreement.

The new home purchaser may end up paying substantially more than anticipated and this is not apparent until completion of the work. If you enter into a Cost Plus Contract, it must be clearly stated as such and that you are aware of this fact prior to signing. If this is not clearly stated you may terminate the contract prior to completion.

**Fixed Price or Lump Sum** – is a contract that is inclusive of all building costs to include materials and labour, profit margins, charges, insurances, local council and state government fees and taxes.

Should there be cost fluctuations, they are either allowed for in the Contract Sum or can be determined by a formula included in the documents.

It is rare in building contracts for fluctuations to be allowed for in any way other than by inclusion in the Lump Sum.

Fixed Price contracts are best determined when the tender has full, well documented drawings and specifications, and when all finishes and fixtures have been fully selected and scheduled nominating supplier, type, colour, etc.

When certain works are not defined prior to tendering a “Provisional sum” (for supply and fixing) or a “Prime Cost Item” (for supply only and fixing by the Builder) can be included in the Contract with final details being determined during construction.

**In your own interest**, it is essential that you are aware of the type of contract and legal implications before signing the Building Contract.

## HOME DESIGN COSTS

Home building can cost from \$750.00 to \$3,500 a square metre and more to build depending on the size of the building, the design complexity and the detail and degree of embellishment. Five square metres of unusable space could waste approximately \$3,750 or more of your precious budget.

Large unusable spaces should be avoided for reasons stated in Open Planning (*next page*) whereas smaller, well designed rooms can be less expensive, more easily furnished, create a sense of emotional and physical security and insulate from distractions.



It may be preferable that living spaces flow from interior to exterior for diverse purpose as demonstrated in the previous floor plan.



Areas to be considered in and around the new home are:-

- **Vehicular and pedestrian** access to the site;
- **Permanent vehicular storage**;
- **Temporary parking** and formal entry for visitors;
- **Entry to the main house** from the garage and surrounding exterior areas;
- **General storage areas** for personal items, food, linen, garden and workshop;
- **Refuse storage** and garbage truck pick up area;
- **Recreational areas** to include gardens, children's play areas, informal eating and cooking, pet runs, security and confinement and games.
- **Public** to include family and recreational, and
- **Private** to include bedrooms, study areas and withdrawing rooms. and
- Service area kitchen, bathrooms, etc.

## INTERIOR DESIGN CRITERIA

Before designing the interior of your new or to be renovated home it is recommended that an extensive briefing session be conducted with your Architect, Designer and/or Builder.

**The brief should consider:-**

- Budget,
- Family/ individual requirements,
- Interior and exterior entertaining,
- Private and public areas,

- Storage and service areas internally and externally,
- Recreational desires,
- Life style – formal and informal,
- Cooking preferences to include indoor and outdoor,
- Religious beliefs (if any),
- Future family extensions,
- Preferences to furnishings, styles and colours,
- Studying, reading and movies,
- Pets confinement and wet areas,
- Others such as existing trees, neighbors and outbuildings.

## SPATIAL REQUIREMENTS OPEN PLANNING

Open plan interior spaces create a sense of spaciousness but can have disadvantages such as noise from adjacent areas and lack of refuge.

Generally open planned rooms are often too small for several functions and too large for one. If open planning is preferred, the function of each area should be planned in accordance with nominal room's sizes as demonstrated in Chapter 2 – "*A Beginning to Interior Design and Decorating*".

Parents with young children may prefer open planning for supervision, safety and security. However noisy activities such as television viewing or private activities such as studying, reading and other tasks requiring concentration should be delegated to more private areas of the home.

Multi-functional large spaces, if not carefully planned can seem barn like,

intimidating and incoherent and may be oppressive if ceilings are low.

Ceilings can be raked, pitched, vaulted or pyramidal to give height and dynamics to the open plan interior. It is generally recommended that the larger the space, the higher the ceiling.

Large spaces may often need "humanizing" by the addition and arrangement of furniture and partitions of varying types.

Partitions may be glass, fabric, metal, "shoji" screens, semi-transparent blinds and high permanent furniture items which can be movable or fixed and double as storage facilities and decorative elements.

Care should be taken to ensure that large spaces do not become monotonous with respect to furniture selection or too light or dark and lacking in colour, texture and function delineation.

Oversized and monotonous spaces may be improved visually by the addition of taller furniture items such as partitions, wall units, free standing storage compartments, plants, free standing lamps and objet d'art.

However, the aforementioned solutions should not be long term solutions to poor quality design.

The permanent addition of carefully arranged artificial illumination sources such as fixed ceiling and wall lights and moveable standard lamps of various types, sizes and intensities may also help alleviate the visual boredom of oversized spaces.

## FAMILY ROOMS

Often thought as being a new concept, the family room is in fact the oldest concept of a recreational interior.

Cave dwellers had communal family spaces. The Greeks and Romans had Pompeian atria and medieval great halls sheltered multifarious activities, including sleeping and eating.

Today, there seems to be a propensity to include informal eating, over sized casual furniture and space for activities such as television viewing, telephone and general conversation, entertaining and hobbies adjacent to kitchen areas often resulting in complete mayhem in the one space.

However, the more positive aspect of a family room is that they leave other areas of the home free from noise and hyperactivity allowing rest, study and meditation. Multifarious rooms comprising kitchen, dining and family require 40 square metres minimum.

## COMMUNAL AND UTILITY ROOMS

In the southern hemisphere, family rooms and communal living areas are best located to the north/west to maximize winter sun. The hottest aspect in summer, care must be taken to protect windows from the intensely hot summer sun.

This can be achieved by including generous eaves or pergolas, planting deciduous climbers or trees and incorporating solar protective window treatments.

On cold winter mornings however, maximize the warmth of the early morning sun by locating morning utility

rooms such as kitchens, breakfast dining and bathrooms to the east.

Once again, all care must be taken in summer to avoid interior overheating by incorporating eaves, pergolas and window treatments protecting walls and windows from intense morning heat.

Considering the aforementioned, early morning rooms are best situated on the eastern aspect of the home, midday rooms facing north and afternoon rooms facing west. However, a dominant view may override room locations at the expense of the spatial quality.

## PRIVATE ROOMS

Primitive man slept on the ground, on rock ledges, in caves, or in trees, seeking protection from the elements and his enemies.

From the Egyptian civilization to medieval Europe, people generally slept on pallets often on the floor in groups, whilst only the privileged few enjoyed private quarters.

Now, we assume that, seldom more than two persons sleep or bathe in one room. Where there are three children, does this require an additional bathroom if budget is tight?

Design private rooms with this in mind considering budget overload for additional bathrooms and toilets and avoid compromising the budget by using unnecessary, over rated, expensive finishes.

Generally the most beautiful expensive finishes are quite often the most delicate and impractical.

Prioritize the relationship of interior to exterior spaces and the flow to private gardens and bedrooms and formal gardens to entertaining areas utilizing wasted garden spaces.

Finally, indulge the family with sumptuously comfortable well designed furniture. At whatever cost, do not jeopardize the comfort, posture and ultimate health of your family by purchasing lesser quality furniture because of lack of funds caused by building budget blowouts.

It is far more practical to facilitate the health and physical welfare of family members to the “wow” factor of kitchens and bathrooms.

## Bedrooms

Bedrooms can be multi-functional to include sleeping, reading, studying, meditating and music but above all, must be comfortable, well illuminated and ventilated.

Initially, occupiers should be afforded the opportunity and enjoyment of selecting their own design solutions, finishing and furniture requirements including décor.

To retire to one's bedroom to read or listen to music can be most enjoyable and just as relaxing as sleeping.

Design considerations are:-

- Occupiers' age



- Physical condition,
- Gender,
- Hobbies
- Likes and dislikes and whether these requirements will change rapidly in the future.

The environment most conducive to relaxing and sleeping is not necessarily the environment required for studying. The preferred environment for each bedroom is best determined by the occupier.

Should the function of the bedroom be varied, consider the conversion of one function to the other by the alteration of illumination and inclusion and location of furniture items to suit each function at the preferred time of day.

Lighting required for sleeping should be dimmable with controls convenient to the bed. Lighting for studying is best directly above the user to ensure elimination of shadows being cast with controls convenient to the worktop. Utilize as much day light as possible by locating worktops and desks to windows.

Provide general power outlets and lighting for tasks such as reading, computers and printers and music systems and location of electrical switches at point of use and easy adjustment.

Bedroom design prerequisites will also include number of beds, bedside tables, general, toy and clothing storage, seating, mirrors, sound insulation and buffer zones such as built-in robes to adjoining walls especially for the very young and the elderly.

Selection of window treatments to control the penetration of natural light during the day and provide privacy at night must be considered earlier rather than later as building details for housing such treatments may require special attention by the home designer or builder.

If design details are not concluded initially, it may cost more ultimately or even worse, selections may be an after thought or option resulting in long term disappointment.

It may save time and unnecessary expenditure suggesting that each family member list their priorities and requests at the commencement of the preliminary design stage.

## Location of Bedrooms

In the past, children's bedrooms were poorly situated in areas of the house not usually considered for the aspect or vistas resulting in depressing outlooks to boundary fences. The master bedroom was always afforded the best location, generally at the front of house with the best aspect and view.

This attitude may be ideal for a one couple home, but children spend more time in their bedrooms sleeping, playing, reading or studying than adults. A child's bedroom is their only point of salvation therefore we should offer children bedrooms in the best locations.

The criteria for location of bedrooms may be dependant on the necessity for supervision of the very young, closeness to the sick and elderly,

seclusion for private activities and privacy for personal day and night recreation and tasks. It is important also to consider the penetration of light and ventilation.

Young children need to be close to their parents whereas adolescent children, being more independent, may be further from their parents, possibly in proximity to family and study areas or housed in a completely separate wing of the home.

Placing bedrooms near the kitchen can make sleeping difficult during the day for adults but can create controlled and supervised bedrooms and playrooms for toddlers.

Families with teenagers may require independent external access to bedrooms so that each can come and go without having to enter and pass other rooms disturbing the occupiers.

Perhaps bedrooms accessed from a communal passage or individual external doors to each bedroom may be more practical; however, this may impose additional security and demands on site access.

I trust, in the not too distant future, home designers will place more importance on children's well-being and less importance on formal pomposity and ponderous embellishment being awarded to seldom used formal living and dining areas monopolizing the best locations of the home.

## Bedroom Ambiance

Bedrooms should not be devoid of external and internal stimuli.

To waken to the songs of birds or a view to the garden can sometimes determine your mood for the remainder of the day.

Children's bedrooms are usually small, thus claustrophobic, too hot or cold, deprived of sufficient storage and disturbingly gloomy. Colours are often dull which may be why they have no desire to keep the room tidy.

Low ceilings, poor ventilation, incorrect orientation with views to boundary fences thus an over supply of window treatments and security screens can be early contributors to depression.

I encourage new home builders and renovators to consider the location of bedrooms to the garden rather than overlooking boundary fences.

## Bedroom Storage

Storage areas are often badly designed without consideration to specific needs and location to utility rooms and service areas.

Apart from the kitchen, general house storage normally consists of the following being obviously inadequate:-

- small vanity cupboard with two to three drawers in each bathroom for all occupiers,
- laundry storage comprising one linen/broom full height cupboard,
- minimum laundry work bench for sorting and folding, and

- linen cupboard housing everything from redundant clothing, bed linen, fresh laundry, suitcases, electrical appliances and house junk.

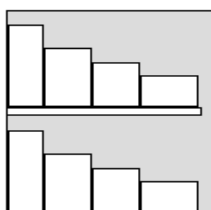
The above can be severely inadequate for the average family of 2 adults and 2 children.

The designing and manufacturing of storage cupboards can consume a large percentage of your building budget and it is wise to determine exactly what is required prior to Contracts being signed. (See *Kitchen, Laundry, Bathroom Chapter*)

## General Storage

Are you a hoarder or a collector?

- Do you expect your family to expand during occupation of this home?
- How much storage has each occupier lived with in the past and was it adequate?
- Is it best to have cupboard, shelving or drawer storage or a mixture? Cupboards and shelving are wasteful as only half the storage is utilized as demonstrated.
- Determine how much and what type is required for each room?



Shelf storage

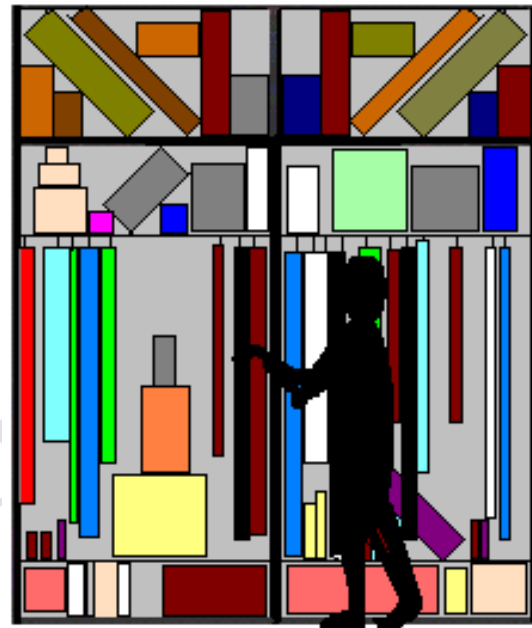


Drawer Storage

Sections through shelving and drawers

- How much storage is required for each occupier of each room?

More often than not, if you provide two metres of well designed storage space the occupiers will use it **wisely** but provide five metres of unresolved oversized space and the users will fill it carelessly.



Large undivided compartments

In the above illustration, the robe space has been divided into six large storage compartments for hanging and bulk storage. There are no drawers or smaller compartments thus large articles are simply thrown into the cupboard creating havoc, confusion and frustration for the user.

In the following illustration the compartments have been carefully designed to accommodate a variety of clothing, luggage and smalls such as handbags, hats, jewelry, drawers for shoes, jumpers and dainties. By keeping the compartments smaller and varied in size the robe will be more efficient.



Smaller divided compartments

## Storage Dimensions for Children

Children are often severely chastised for untidy bedrooms and unfortunately one form of punishment can be - "sent to their room to clean it".

Perhaps this untidiness and apathy is the result of a distinct lack of pride brought about by the aforementioned design inadequacies and lack of storage facilities.

Children require clothing storage as follows:-

- **Half height hanging** for coats, dressing gowns, dresses, shirts and slacks;
- **Slim line drawers** for underwear, socks and accessories;
- **Bulk** for jumpers, toys, sport and recreational equipment, school

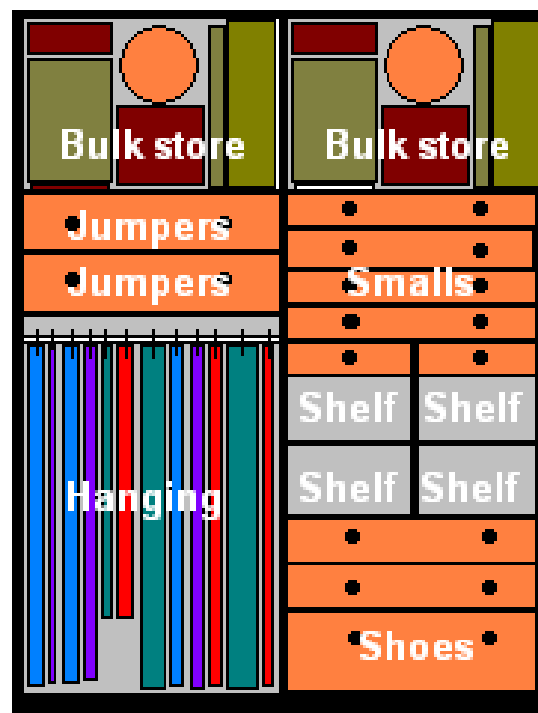
bags, hats, suitcases and additional bed linen when required.

- **Medium Drawers** for shoes and t-shirts.

Carefully calculate the amount of drawer, general bulk storage, shelving and hanging space required for children up to the age of 16 years.

Following are recommended storage compartments for children:-

ITEM	WIDTH mm	HEIGHT mm	DEEP mm
Hanging rail @ 1.2 above floor level	900 +	1100 +	650
Shelves x 2	900 +	350 - 450	400
Drawers x 4	450 +	150 - 450	500
Bulk store x 2	900 +	600	500
Shoe store x 1	900 +	200 - 300	600



1.8m wide x 2.4 m high

## Storage dimensions for Adults

Adults require clothing storage as follows:-

- **Full height** for dresses, gowns and coats;
- **Half height** hanging for shirts, skirts and trousers;
- **Bulk** for woolens;
- **Slim line** for dainties, socks, accessories and jewelry;
- **Shelves** or **drawers** for hats, bags;
- **Regular drawers** for shoes and t-shirts, and
- **Bulk** compartments for suitcases and travel bags, additional bed linen as required.

Following are recommended storage compartments for adults:-

ITEM	WIDTH	HEIGHT	DEPTH
Hanging x 2	900 +	1650	600
Shelving x 2	900 +	350 - 450	600
Drawers x 4	450 +	350 - 450	600
Bulk store x 2	900 +	750	600
Shoe store x 2	900 +	200 - 300	600

*The above design dimensions are for one adult only.*

## Bedroom Decoration Considerations

It is common place for women to subconsciously, but affectionately inflict "decor" personalities, likes and dislikes on others living in the home.

Master bedrooms are often decorated in highly "feminine" modes with festoons of lace and brocade being

highly perfumed and pastel usually without consultation from the other half. But then, would any self respecting man "dare" comment on the decorating prowess of the "Officer in Charge" of the home décor.

Bedrooms being shared by two people should reflect the personalities of both occupiers with individual smaller personal rooms being available for day or night retirement for reading commonly known in Australia as a "parents' retreat".

## Furniture Generally

Furnishings and furniture should always be selected for necessity, suitability and comfort and not aesthetics alone.

All women desire the most beautiful furniture and furnishings in their homes.

Unfortunately this does not necessarily constitute a successfully designed, environmentally friendly well adjusted home for the enjoyment of other family members and visitors.

We often overlook the superior quality of older style furniture we have lying about the home or in the back shed. Grandmother's old lounge suite, a baby's cot, an unloved chair or fantastic solid timber shelving left behind in Grandfather's tool shed.

If you have in your possession furniture items which may be old and unattractive but useful and oozing quality, there are ways in which to rescue them should the furniture be unappealing.



Selecting finishing colours similar to wall colours will visually de-emphasize the furniture within the room. The furniture becomes integral to the architecture rather than a contrasting addition or feature.

However, you may have a piece of furniture or objet d'art you wish to emphasize creating a feature in the room. In this case, the item should then contrast in design details, period of design, colour and/or fabric, or perhaps an accumulation of all

Colour is always the key to successfully mixing and matching old with new. (*Refer to Colour Chapter 3*)

Whatever the decision, be subtle!

## Areas for individual activities, work and hobbies

Personal growth, expression and self-realization are becoming increasingly important objectives in our lives.

In addition, many in our society now commonly partake in religious and spiritual traditions that make demands on planning and space.

**Prayer** and **meditation** require quietude, subdued lighting and sometimes space for books and altars.

**Writing** requires desk and chair, natural and artificial direct illumination, good air circulation and ventilation, acoustic insulation from extraneous noise and furniture that promotes good posture.

**Knitting** and **crocheting** can be enjoyed at reading stations.

**Mending, sewing, painting and craft**, for example are not so easily provided for as these areas and the tools and materials used can be hazardous to children requiring storerooms, lockable cabinets, water and sinks.

## GUESTS

Local authorities are cautious about guest accommodation being planned as a semi-detached by subterfuge.

Check your local town planning scheme and local authority policies carefully.

The level of hospitality afforded house-guests is determined by the manner in which the guests are entertained and accommodated.

As any other private area of the home, they require secluded sleeping and dressing areas, storage for clothes, bathroom facilities and the possibility of getting outside the hosts' family circle from time to time.

For longer stays, sitting areas and direct external access are matters for consideration.

Should your building budget be insufficient to include a guest suite, it may be that one or more children's rooms be planned to accommodate guests for a day or so, or when the children leave home to become occasional house guests themselves.

## COLOUR

Colour may be considered for its environmental contribution, emotional influence and appeal.

Factors such as room orientation, level of illumination, room proportions, surrounding environment, adjoining spaces, age of the occupier and maintenance need be considered when selecting colour schemes.

Dull rooms can be enhanced by the introduction of light bright colours. Rooms naturally illuminated and overly bright can be softened and cooled with the introduction of dark cool colours.

Colour can psychologically enlarge or reduce space, decrease or increase ceiling height, emphasize or de-emphasized furniture.

Colour can be advantageous in aiding concentration, promoting a sense of repose, increasing awareness and prompting activity and conversation.

Informal eating areas may appear to be more cheerful if painted happy colours such as tinted yellow, red and blue prompting polite conversation between family members.

Happy colours can induce joyfulness putting us in good stead for the remainder of the day.

So whatever your choice, select your colours schemes wisely.

See Colour Chapter 3 for colour properties, principles and schemes.

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